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## **A Suite Business Model**

### ***Executive Suites Offer a Place to Hang Your Shingle***

Seemingly gone with the recession are the days of staking your business claim with a dedicated office building. Now, the trend, particularly for small businesses, is shifting toward eliminating the overhead and paying for an executive suite.

The Santa Clarita Valley is home to several executive suite buildings, among them Barrister Executive Suites and Studio e Valencia.

With flexible lease terms, businesses can set up shop quickly and easily, said Max Sucee, a consultant for Barrister. The company's Turnberry Lane location is home to more than 90 businesses, which he said include everything from attorneys and psychologists to travel agents.

"There's an influx of corporate professions in transition as a result of the economy," Sucee said.

Executive suites provide a good return on investment, he said, because there's no need to pay administrative staff -

Barrister offers reception and secretarial service - and allows for a focus on the core business.

Another growing trend has been that of "virtual offices," he said. For instance, a real-estate agent can work from home, but have his calls routed through Barrister's office.

Sucee said Barrister has more than 1,000 virtual-office clients, with 42 at the Valencia location.

Doing business with Barrister also means tenants have access to more than 700 conference rooms throughout the country.

"Virtual offices are the big push," he said.

The suite systems has short- and long-term appeal, one business advisor said.

"Executive suites can be good solutions," said Steve Tannehill, director of the Small Business Development Center at College of the Canyons.

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He's observed both startup businesses and laid-off professionals looking to hang out their own shingle take advantage of the system, using a suite as a way to get started and build a professional presence.

It depends on the firm, but an executive suite typically tends to be a stepping stone toward a dedicated business location.

Conversely, he said some businesses may be completely content with their size and staying in a suite.

"For some people, it can be a great long-term solution," he said. "I don't really see a downside."

The executive-suite option is a smart one for entrepreneurs, said Christine Van Scoy, property manager for Studio e, located on Smyth Drive.

"In an economy like this, it keeps costs low," she said. "It helps the small business person continue."

Studio e is owned by eSuites Inc., which also has a site in West Hollywood. Businesses can look at spending anywhere from \$99 a month for a virtual-office setup to about \$975 a month for an office suitable for three to four people, she said.

Studio e has about 36 office spaces, most of which are filled, Van Scoy said, and added about a third of the tenants have been there from day one.

She said Studio e is mostly home to business professionals - everything from court reporters and attorneys, to financial planners and mortgage agents.

"We can have people up and running in 24 hours," she said.